

Sacred values: medieval archaeology and spiritual heritage

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SACRED VALUES: MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY AND SPIRITUAL HERITAGE

INTRODUCTION: 'LIVING HERITAGE'

This book aims to engage medieval archaeology with two distinct fields: heritage studies and the material study of religion. The focus is on medieval Christian heritage, principally later medieval monasticism in Britain, while this introductory chapter frames medieval sacred heritage in a global context. It reflects on how we define sites of sacred heritage and the basis on which we value and interpret them. What is the contemporary *value* of medieval European sacred heritage in an ostensibly secular society? The archaeological study of medieval Christianity has remained largely outside social, political and heritage discourses. Religion is frequently perceived as something separate from everyday life in the Middle Ages, the exclusive preserve of the church. As a discipline, archaeologists have also failed to consider the significance of medieval sacred heritage to contemporary social issues such as identity, conflict, cultural diversity and professional ethics. Why have medieval archaeologists failed to reflect critically on the sacred? How can we connect medieval archaeology with the sacred, to make it potentially more sustainable as a discipline and more meaningful to a range of audiences?

The first and final chapters of this book place the archaeology of medieval religion within a critical framework of heritage analysis, examining how archaeological knowledge is constructed in relation to belief and reflecting on the contemporary value of sacred heritage. The central chapters explore

medieval monastic archaeology through the lens of the material study of religion, focusing on ‘what bodies and things do, on the practices that put them to work, on the epistemological and aesthetic paradigms that organise the bodily experience of things’ (Meyer et al. 2010: 209). Archaeology can make a distinctive contribution to understanding the *embodied experience* of religion through the study of material culture, bodily techniques and the spaces of ritual performance (Mohan and Warnier 2017). A practice-based approach to medieval monastic archaeology enables innovative perspectives on identity and regional distinctiveness, technologies of healing and magic, and memory practices in the sacred landscape. This introductory chapter reflects on how archaeologists have engaged with the sacred and considers why and how sacred heritage matters.

I will begin by briefly exploring the term ‘heritage’, a label which has multiple meanings and connotations. Heritage refers in one sense to the fixed material legacy of the past; in this case, the archaeology, material culture and landscapes of medieval belief. It also represents the contemporary use of this material legacy for social, economic and political agendas, that is, the use of the past to shape the present and the future (Harvey 2008). Heritage theory has developed in a piecemeal fashion over the past thirty years: two dominant strands have emerged, with one branch contributing critical commentaries on *heritage as a cultural process*, and the other addressing more applied questions in *heritage management* (Waterton and Watson 2013). The field of critical heritage studies examines how heritage as a cultural process represents power relations through language and cultural discourse, often applying a semiotic approach (Smith 2006). More recently, heritage theorists have reasserted the role of material things and the importance of the body in constructing the social experience of heritage (Harrison 2012; Holtorf 2013a). A third and alternative approach has interrogated *heritage as a political process*, for example investigating multilateral heritage bureaucracies, the political relationships between heritage and conflict, and how the material remains of the past are mobilised to shape new versions of post-colonial and post-conflict histories (Meskell 2012, 2016).

Among heritage professionals, two diverging philosophies on *heritage management* have developed over recent decades, resulting in a conflict between approaches that emphasise *evidential* value on the one hand, versus *social* value on the other (Emerick 2014: 219). The more established tradition in Europe is that of cultural heritage management, in which decisions are guided by professional assessments of the ‘importance’ of a monument according to qualities such as historical or aesthetic value, authenticity or relevance to a national story (Emerick 2014: 1–5). This prevailing model has been termed ‘the Authorized Heritage Discourse’ (AHD): ‘a professional discourse that privileges expert values and knowledge about the past and its material manifestations, and dominates and regulates professional heritage practices’ (Smith

2006: 4). A contrasting approach emphasises the 'significance' of a place according to the different contemporary values attached to it, often privileging social values over established national or international criteria based on age, attribution or connoisseurship. The 'living heritage' approach explores heritage in relation to living people and how they interpret and engage emotionally with their material world (Clark 2010; Emerick 2014; Holtorf 2013b). This more inclusive perspective was pioneered in Australia, the United States and Africa, to acknowledge and explore conflicts of meaning around indigenous heritage. Its influence spread rapidly following the adoption of the Faro Convention by the Council of Europe in 2005 (Holtorf and Fairclough 2013). Living heritage emphasises an interactive, community-based approach to heritage management. It champions local significance and sustainability and represents heritage as something made in the present and renewable, rather than something finite and inherited (Emerick 2014: 7). An emphasis on the changing meaning of heritage can also be seen in the French/Quebecoise approach to heritage as 'patrimonialisation', the dynamic process by which material remains *become* heritage, and how successive generations reinvent or reappropriate heritage by discovering new values in changing social contexts (Berthold et al. 2009).

The living heritage perspective emphasises diversity and multi-vocality – the legitimacy of different living voices to participate in heritage debates (Hodder 2008) – but it has seldom addressed the *spiritual* value of heritage or the voices of faith groups in interpreting their own heritage. However, the living heritage approach has been incorporated in strategies for the conservation and management of sacred sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list, such as Meteora in Greece (Poulios 2014), the Temple of the Tooth in Sri Lanka (Wijesuriya 2000) and Angkor Wat in Cambodia (Baillie 2006). The spiritual value of heritage is central to understanding the concept of '*intangible heritage*', which encompasses the oral traditions, myths, performing arts, rituals, knowledge and skills that are transmitted between generations to provide communities with a sense of identity and continuity (Nara Document on Authenticity, ICOMOS 1994; UNESCO 2003). The recognition of intangible heritage developed from non-Western understandings of heritage but offers interpretative potential globally. It places greater emphasis on empathy, present beliefs and the importance of local voices and communities in making decisions about heritage (Jones 2010, 2017). In summary, there is an increasing tendency for heritage practices to focus on recognition of the *contemporary significance* of the past based on its *social value* to living communities. While this perspective has been adopted in global heritage studies, it has so far had little impact on the archaeological interpretation of medieval sites and material culture. Further, neither archaeologists nor heritage practitioners have given sufficient consideration to *spiritual value* in shaping contemporary understandings of medieval European heritage.

This book aims to revitalise the archaeological study of medieval sacred sites by exploring currents in heritage studies, museology and the material study of religion. Prevailing archaeological approaches continue to prioritise constructs of value that have been challenged by social (constructivist) approaches to heritage. By privileging certain narratives – such as authenticity, economic value and ‘rational’ behaviour – archaeologists have failed to take adequate account of *spiritual value* and its relevance to people both today and in the past. Archaeological interpretations of medieval religion can be enriched by engaging critically with supposedly ‘irrational’ concepts like folk belief, magic and spirit, to develop compelling accounts that acknowledge multi-vocality and the popular appeal of intangible heritage. At the same time, these alternative perspectives reveal innovative insights that have been neglected by previous archaeological scholarship on medieval beliefs, such as materiality, sensory embodiment, gender, healing, memory and folk ritual.

SECULAR TRADITIONS: WHY ARE ARCHAEOLOGISTS AFRAID OF THE SACRED?

My opening premise is that medieval archaeologists have not engaged sufficiently with the sacred, either the beliefs of medieval people or those of our audiences today. The intellectual tradition of archaeology privileges a humanist or secular position, even when we study the remains of religious buildings and landscapes. This is not merely a methodological approach but an implicit theoretical position. For example, the standard textbooks of church and monastic archaeology typically focus on technology and economy, emphasising engineering feats such as water management and milling (e.g. Bond 2004; Coppack 1990; Greene 1992; Götling 1993; Scholkmann 2000). Buildings archaeologists have explored medieval churches principally in terms of their construction technology and chronological development (e.g. Rodwell 2005), in contrast with the more aesthetic approaches of architectural history, which often focus on religious and iconographic meanings. This secular approach to medieval archaeology informs the interpretation of monastic heritage sites and their understanding by the public – a tendency particularly prevalent in Britain. It has been suggested that this attitude may stem from the severe treatment of monasteries by the Protestant Reformation in the mid-sixteenth century. The Belgian architectural historian Thomas Coomans makes the following observation: ‘Monasticism was so deeply eradicated in England that few people today understand the spiritual dimension of abbeys. This is quite a paradox when we realise that the archaeological approach to medieval abbeys and the knowledge of material culture in Britain is one of the most developed in Europe’ (Coomans 2012: 227).

The first century of monastic archaeology (c.1870–1970) focused on recovering architectural plans and documenting the variations associated with monastic ‘filiation’ (i.e. the respective monastic orders). From the 1970s onwards, monastic archaeology in Britain shifted away from studying the ritual life of the church and cloister to focus on the productive and service areas of the inner and outer court (Gilchrist 2014). For example, Mick Aston situated his work on monastic landscapes as ‘an attempt to show monasteries as economic institutions coping with the difficulties and opportunities presented by the landscapes in which they were built’ (Aston 1993: 16). Underpinning these studies is the model of the rural monastery as a self-sufficient organism, in keeping with the ideals expressed in the Rule of St Benedict, written at Monte Cassino in Italy by Benedict of Nursia (c.480–543 CE). Medieval archaeology experienced a significant paradigm shift in which the discipline consciously moved away from the study of religious belief and ritual. It was influenced by methodological innovations, such as the development of environmental and landscape archaeology, and by new scientific currents advanced by processual archaeology.

Monastic archaeology has focused almost exclusively on the study of discrete monuments and their buildings and landscapes. Archaeological questions have been addressed at the scale of the institution with relatively little attention directed towards the individual experience of the sacred. There are of course exceptions to the rule, including a number of important studies on monastic space and embodiment (e.g. Bonde et al. 2009; Bruzelius 1992, 2014; Cassidy-Welch 2001; Gilchrist 1994; Gilchrist and Sloane 2005; Williams 2013), complementing a broader corpus of archaeological work on the meaning and use of medieval religious spaces (e.g. Giles 2000; Graves 2000; Ó Carragáin 2010; Roffey 2006). The study of monastic landscapes is beginning to see a shift away from studies based on single monuments toward broader studies of multi-period landscapes which highlight the complex interrelationships between religious and secular sites (e.g. Pestell 2004). The dominant archaeological emphasis on the technological and economic roles of the monastery is being challenged by novel approaches that address ritual continuities and discontinuities over the long term (e.g. Austin 2013; Everson and Stocker 2011).

The ‘economic turn’ in medieval archaeology in the 1970s was important in opening up a new intellectual space for a relatively young discipline that had struggled to demonstrate a research agenda independent from the discipline of medieval history (Gerrard 2003). The study of agricultural and industrial landscapes offered a distinctively *materialist* enquiry, revealing an aspect of medieval life that was not accessible through historical documents. It differed from art-historical approaches that focused on the aesthetic qualities of material culture and privileged values of connoisseurship. Instead, it resulted in a privileging of economic themes and the projection of secular values onto the

study of medieval religious settlements and material culture. This approach is characteristic of the study of monastic and church archaeology in Britain and much of Western Europe, but it is not a global trait. For example, a strong focus on ritual has continued to dominate archaeological scholarship on Eastern Christianity and Buddhist monasticism (Finnernan 2012: 253; Shaw 2013a: 84). However, it is noteworthy that recent work by Western scholars has begun to prioritise the economic and technological landscapes of Buddhist monasticism (Ray 2014a: xiii).

This tendency to frame religion in terms of economic power relations is part of a wider intellectual tradition in Western archaeology. Severin Fowles has argued that archaeological approaches to prehistoric religion are characterised by a secularist position, one which pervades both the European archaeological tradition and the American anthropological school (Fowles 2013; Meier and Tillessen 2014). The last twenty years have seen an explosion of archaeological interest in prehistoric religions, but much of this work has deconstructed the concept of the sacred as a meaningful category. Some prehistorians propose universal definitions of religion focusing on symbolism and belief in the supernatural (e.g. Malone et al. 2007: 2), while others reconceptualise religion as an aspect of everyday life, or a holistic worldview. They have been influenced by ritual theorists who stress that even quotidian aspects of life are ‘ritualised’, dissolving the boundary formerly perceived between the sacred and profane (Bell 1992). Many archaeologists argue that there was no understanding of religion as a separate sphere of life in past societies ranging from prehistoric Europe to medieval Islam and pre-Columbian Central America (e.g. Bradley 2005; Graham et al. 2013; Insoll 2004). Some completely reject the idea that people in the past were motivated by a concept of the numinous. Research on Stonehenge is a prime example: the current orthodoxy of interpretation is framed in terms of the veneration of ancestors, rather than a celebration of the gods. The argument is that henge monuments were constructed in wood for ceremonial use by the living community and in stone to commemorate the ancestral dead (Parker Pearson and Ramilisonina 1998).

There is also a strong tendency in archaeology to focus on *ritual practice* rather than holistic understandings of the sacred. For example, Åsa Berggren and Liv Nilsson Stutz argue for the development of a practice-based ritual theory that will better connect with archaeological sources of evidence. They call for an emphasis on ‘the traces of what people in the past were *doing* rather than with what those actions “meant”, or signified’ (2010: 173; original italics). Archaeologists of the medieval period have frequently reflected on the importance of formal liturgy in the design and use of churches. But ‘ritual’ extends beyond the codified ceremonies of the church to encompass the material aspects of everyday life. Prehistorians are more comfortable in engaging with ritual as a distinct *material process*, often emphasising ceremonial events such as

feasting and funerals (Swenson 2015). However, ritual is usually conceptualised by archaeologists within a Marxist framework, as a means of legitimating power relations and extending social control (Swenson 2015: 331; Fogelin 2007). There have been calls for cross-cultural studies of ritual as a materially marked process that is susceptible to archaeological analysis (Swenson 2015: 340). Rituals have multiple meanings and they are constantly in flux: through rituals, people are able to transform religious belief and bring about change (Bell 1997; Fogelin 2007). An approach based on *practice theory* has been advocated to emphasise the role of human agency in shaping ritual experience (rooted in the works of Pierre Bourdieu, e.g. 1977). For instance, spatial studies have explored how architectural layouts have promoted ritual experience that favoured either monastic/clerical *or* lay experience, in contexts ranging from early Buddhist monasteries in southern India to parish churches in medieval England (Fogelin 2003; Graves 2000).

Recent anthropological approaches to religion have emphasised the centrality of the body and its interaction with material culture to produce religious knowledge and experience (Mohan and Warnier 2017; Morgan 2010). The '*matière à penser*' approach to material culture reasserts the role of techniques of the body (after Mauss 2006 [1936]), and takes new inspiration from cognitive neuroscience (Gowlland 2011; Warnier 2013). It proposes that two different types of knowledge are active in constructing religious practice: verbalised knowledge, focusing on creeds and texts, and procedural knowledge, based on sensory experience and 'bodily techniques that may or may not be immediately identifiable as religious' (Mohan and Warnier 2017: 371). Procedural knowledge requires a period of learning and apprenticeship in order to draw effectively on the material world to produce a religious imaginary. Medieval monastic training can be understood in these terms, requiring a novitiate of one year, plus four years of further training before final vows, during which time procedural knowledge was acquired. This ranged from sign language used in the cloister during periods of silence, to complex forms of liturgy and meditation that drew upon material culture to stimulate memory (Carruthers 2000). The '*matière à penser*' school advocates a new focus on the interaction between the material and the sensory and how together they mediate power relations. The approach emphasises the embodied religious subject but continues to project a secular framework. It assumes that devotees are 'marched' or compelled to belief: sensory experience persuades a subject 'who is often unaware of the process and, hence, uncritical about it' (Mohan and Warnier 2017: 381).

How did archaeology as a discipline come to be dominated by secularist reasoning? A key turning point is said to be an essay by Christopher Hawkes published in 1954, in which he set out the famous 'ladder of inference'. His paper is often taken as a warning to archaeologists against straying into the

sticky realm of ritual and belief, effectively excluding this area from the legitimate questions to be addressed by archaeology. In fact, Hawkes carefully distinguished between text-free and text-aided archaeology, suggesting that historical sources and folklore should be used when available to illuminate questions of belief (Evans 1998). Nevertheless, ‘Hawkes’s ladder’ had a major influence on how processual archaeologists approached religion and ritual. For example, burials were studied as social or economic status markers rather than as ritual deposits (Nilsson Stutz 2016: 16). Marxist perspectives had an even more pervasive influence on archaeology, beginning with the works of Vere Gordon Childe and continuing through processual and post-processual perspectives (Fowles 2013: 28). Archaeologists tend to frame religion in Marxist terms, as superstructure and false ideology, structural mechanisms of social control that aim to maintain hegemonic power relations (Swenson 2015: 331).

I include myself in this stereotype: as an undergraduate, I was fascinated by Childe and chose the topic of Marxism for a special project in my final year. Subsequently, I embarked on a PhD on gender in medieval archaeology, which led (inadvertently) to a focus on nunneries (Gilchrist 1994). It was only half way through my study that I began to reflect more deeply on how spiritual beliefs shaped the embodied experience of medieval religious women. This insight did not come from archaeology, but from an encounter with a contemporary community of enclosed nuns. There are very few substantial architectural remains of medieval nunneries in Britain. I was therefore keen to visit the site of Burnham Abbey in Buckinghamshire, where some of the claustral buildings remain intact. The medieval monastic ruins were acquired by the Society of the Precious Blood in 1916 and an Anglican convent was established on the site. I wrote to one of the sisters, who, serendipitously, was studying archaeology through a correspondence course; she encouraged me to visit the convent under the terms of a religious retreat. From my secular, academic perspective, I chose to structure my retreat as ‘ethnographic fieldwork’. As well as examining the medieval fabric, I observed religious services and interviewed the sisters about their perceptions of sacred space and their current use of the convent’s medieval spaces (Gilchrist 1989). But our conversations grew more intense, with some of the sisters discussing their personal experiences of vocation and the sacred, and their feelings about living apart from the world outside the convent. This episode had a profound impact on my doctoral research, inspiring a focus on female agency and the embodied experience of religious women. Previously nuns were seen as passive objects of feudal relations, daughters without dowries who were conveniently parked in family convents. I was already critical of previous androcentric perspectives that robbed medieval women of social agency, but, well-schooled in Marxist archaeological theory, I had regarded medieval nuns as hapless victims of false consciousness.

The experience of speaking with contemporary nuns about their vocation made me sensitive to the ethics involved in studying religion in both living and past communities. The ethical relationship between archaeologists today and the past peoples whom they study has been raised by Sarah Tarlow and Geoffrey Scarre in relation to archaeological treatment of the dead. Scarre argues that archaeologists do not need to share the religious convictions of people in the past in order to recognise a moral duty of care towards the remains of the dead. Archaeological practice that disregards the values and dignity of people in the past impinges on their status as previously *living beings* (Scarre 2003). Tarlow contends that through archaeological scholarship we participate in animating past people as social beings; we extend their social existence and therefore have an ethical obligation to be responsible in how we represent their beliefs (Tarlow 2006). My contact with a living community of nuns instilled an enduring respect for the beliefs and conscious agency of others, and the genuine spiritual convictions by which they live their lives. It made me think carefully about how I represent the beliefs and experiences of religious women in the past. This early encounter has influenced my engagement with contemporary faith communities and it has shaped my research on the medieval past, particularly in relation to problematic categories of belief such as magic (Gilchrist 2008).

Archaeology's privileging of secular values is particularly evident when discussing magic and 'odd' or inexplicable archaeological deposits (discussed in Chapter 4). Things that cannot be explained in functionalist categories of subsistence or technology are labelled as 'ritual'. Archaeologists stigmatise ritual in the past by framing it as a fallacy, something considered as irrational (Fowles 2013: 9). A classic example is the treatment of 'structured deposition', or 'placed deposits', such as whole pots or animals buried in ditches and pits, or objects placed at critical points in settlements, such as at boundaries, entrances or the corners of houses (Garrow 2012). Such deposits are widely regarded by archaeologists as intentional acts that appear to defy any rational explanation. Joanna Brück critically assessed the assumptions underlying such interpretations, arguing that a series of binaries is projected: secular/profane; rational/irrational; Western/non-Western, and that these attitudes are rooted in the legitimising discourses of European colonialism (Brück 1999). She argues that we need to interpret structured deposition within a different framework of values: placed deposits were *rationally* conceived according to past worldviews, directed towards specific practical purposes such as agriculture and technology.

Structured deposition was long considered by archaeologists to be a pre-Christian rite, confined to prehistoric and Roman contexts. Thus, an additional binary opposition is projected onto placed deposits dating to the medieval period: Christian/pagan joins the list of secular/profane; rational/irrational; Western/non-Western. Here too, a colonial discourse can be

detected in the assumption that the conversion to Christianity erased long-standing practices and worldviews (Petts 2011). It is only in the last decade that medieval archaeologists have identified ‘odd’, ‘special’ or ‘placed’ deposits in medieval contexts, with similarities in the types of objects and materials selected for use across Europe, extending from pagan to Christian eras (Gilchrist 2012; Hamerow 2006). In Scandinavia and the Baltic, deposition appears to have been a common element of ritual practice in the home and the church (Hukantaival 2013). In medieval Denmark, for example, odd deposits comprised animal parts, metal tools and utensils, pottery vessels, coins, personal items such as jewellery, prehistoric lithics and fossils (Falk 2008: 207–8). The prevalent attitude of medieval archaeologists towards such deposits reflects their privileging of secular and economic approaches and their narrow conceptualisation of Christian ritual.

An instructive case is that of coin deposits in Scandinavian churches, with over 65,000 coin finds discovered below wooden floors in 600 churches. An interdisciplinary project based at the University of Oslo is examining coin finds in the context of the relationship between the church and monetisation, focusing on the best recorded church excavations (Gullbekk et al. 2016). Both economic and ritual perspectives are considered, with coins regarded as ‘devotional instruments’ (Myrberg Burström 2018). But the question of whether these coins were *deliberately* deposited is contested. The latest research concludes that these are accidental losses, for example incorporated during processes of floor renewal, or representing overflow from offertory boxes (Gullbekk 2018). Once again, archaeologists project the secular/profane; rational/irrational framework when interpreting inexplicable deposits. And yet, we have ample evidence that the medieval worldview incorporated a rich plurality of ritual practice performed as magic. We have specific archaeological evidence for the ritual use of coins, for example placed with the medieval dead (Gilchrist 2008; Hall 2016a). The historian Richard Kieckhefer proposed that magic should be perceived as ‘an alternative form of rationality’ that was consistent with medieval views of the universe (Kieckhefer 1994), a definition surprisingly close to Brück’s discussion of prehistoric placed deposits (Brück 1999).

Archaeologists often dismiss as superstition any ritual performed outside the orthodox practices of the medieval church. For example, the burial of a complete cat was discovered beneath the foundations of the medieval church of St Mark’s, Lincoln. But archaeologists chose not to report this find when the site monograph was published in 1986, because it smacked of ‘superstition’ (O’Connor 2007: 8; Terry O’Connor pers. comm.). The term ‘superstition’ has always been used pejoratively; it derives from antiquity and means the worship of the true god by inappropriate and unacceptable means (Cameron 2010: 4). More recently, archaeologists have recognised animal deposits in

medieval Christian contexts across Europe. In Italy, for example, a complete cow was found buried in the nave of the mid-fifteenth-century Chiesa della Purificazione at Caronno Pertusella (Lombardy). The cow was placed in a kneeling position, with a coin in its mouth. It was interpreted as a foundation sacrifice – ‘a very pagan-looking’ ritual, which was perceived by the excavators as problematic in a Christian context (Travaini 2015: 221). In the Basque Country (northern Iberian Peninsula), a local rite has been identified in medieval churches and public buildings: chickens were buried in upturned pots as foundation deposits dating to the twelfth or thirteenth centuries. Rather than assigning a ‘pagan’ interpretation to these placed deposits, the practice has been evaluated within the framework of ‘folk religion’, in which traditional rituals were reworked to sit alongside the official liturgy of medieval Christianity (Grau-Sologestoa 2018).

There has been little scholarly attention paid to the archaeology of later medieval magic, a documented aspect of medieval Christian belief (see Chapter 4). The archaeology of magic has the potential to reveal intimate rites that were never documented in clerical texts and to provide a ‘deep time’ perspective on medieval ritual practice (Gilchrist 2019). Until very recently, archaeologists have stubbornly resisted the idea that medieval Christians engaged in such practices, in contrast with the burgeoning enthusiasm for magic shown by medieval and modern historians (Hutton 2016: 2). There is growing historical interest in the rise of magical practices after the Reformation, for example the ritual concealment of objects in buildings, such as animals, clothing and shoes, a practice which is generally interpreted as protection against witchcraft. This field of study has long been pursued by individual researchers like Ralph Merrifield in his landmark book, *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic* (Merrifield 1987). However, the topic has remained on the margins of historical scholarship until relatively recently (Hutton 2016; Manning 2014). Historians now actively discuss the overt ‘spiritual’, ‘sacrificial’ and ‘apotropaic’ purposes behind acts of concealment (Davies 2015: 383), in contrast with the secular framework that archaeologists project onto placed deposits.

The use of folklore has met similar resistance in archaeological circles, although there is growing interest in using folk belief to interpret ritual in post-medieval contexts (Houlbrook 2015; Gavin-Schwartz 2001). A critical approach needs to be taken to collections of historical archives and material culture, which have been shaped by the interests and assumptions of folklore collectors (Cheape 2009: 88; Davies 2015: 385). Many of these collectors promoted the view that pagan religions persisted into the modern period and were reflected in a common belief in supernatural entities such as elves, fairies and siths (Hutton 2014: 379–80; Miller 2004). Archaeologists are more interested in how ritual was integrated in everyday life, such as local understandings of the landscape and the ritual use of objects, for instance the use of

old coins to protect against the evil eye and metal objects to guard against fairies and witches (Gavin-Schwartz 2001). We should be cautious in making assumptions about the long-term continuity of beliefs and in projecting evidence from post-medieval sources back into earlier periods. Taking these caveats into consideration, folklore represents a unique source of evidence for investigating social memory, with potential to enrich our interpretations of medieval beliefs. Archaeology's failure to engage with this material results from the discipline's secular, rationalist perspective, which generally dismisses magic and folk belief as irrational superstition.

SACRED HERITAGE: VALUE AND AUTHENTICITY

Questions of the sacred have also been broadly neglected by the field of heritage studies. There has been relatively little critical reflection on the definition of sacred sites, how perceptions of their materiality and character change over time, and how they are valued by different contemporary audiences. This neglect of sacred heritage contrasts with the growing literature in history, anthropology, museum studies, geography, art and architectural history, law and tourism studies (e.g. Hutton 2014; Meyer and de Witte 2013; Maddrell et al. 2015; Coomans et al. 2012; Coomans 2018; Tsvolas 2014; Dallen and Olsen 2006). Sacred heritage sites are accorded high value internationally, indicated by the proportion awarded emblematic status as UNESCO World Heritage sites, deemed to hold 'outstanding value to humanity'. Around 30 per cent of the 1,000 sites on the World Heritage list can be broadly classified as sacred sites and at least 10 per cent of World Heritage sites are Christian monuments (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>).

Landscapes and monuments defined as sacred heritage are said to follow some common criteria cross-culturally (Brockman 1997; Shackley 2001). They typically fall within the following categories, although many sacred sites meet multiple criteria:

- Locations associated with events in the life of a deity, saint or prophet (e.g. the Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem; al-Aqsa Mosque, Jerusalem)
- Pilgrimage landscapes associated with healing (e.g. Kumono Kodo, Kii Mountains, Japan; Canterbury Cathedral, England)
- Locales associated with religious visions and miracles (e.g. the Sanctuary of Our Lady, Lourdes, France)
- Venues of special religious rituals (e.g. Angkor Wat, Cambodia)
- Tombs of saints, prophets or founders (e.g. Basilica of San Francesco, Assisi, Italy)
- Shrines associated with relics or icons (e.g. Lumbini, Nepal, birthplace and early shrine of the Buddha)
- Ancestral or mythical homes of the gods (e.g. Gamla Uppsala, Sweden, home of the Norse gods)

- Landscapes manifesting the mystical power of nature (e.g. Sedona, Arizona; Uluru, Australia)
- Places of remembrance that commemorate persecutions and genocides (e.g. Auschwitz, Poland)

The distinctive character of sacred heritage resides in the integration of the *tangible* with the *intangible*: sacred sites are physical manifestations of religious myths and mystical beliefs, providing a material place to reflect on the immaterial. The interaction of sacred heritage with *place* is crucial; for instance, medieval monasteries were often located at dramatic, elevated spots that brought the community closer to God, while at the same time providing isolation from the secular world (e.g. Mont-Saint-Michel, Normandy; Rock of Cashel, Ireland; Monte Cassino, Lazio) (Coomans 2018: 85–9). The concept of the sacred is acknowledged as being culturally specific; however, it is frequently argued that sacred places share a cross-cultural quality of being set apart, by virtue of their mystical association with the gods. Sacred heritage sites provide a material connection to the numinous, to mythical personae and supernatural realms. Sacred places denote *otherness* and are perceived as being separate from everyday life (Coomans et al. 2012; Shackley 2001).

How do certain places come to be regarded as sacred? The ‘deep time’ perspective offered by history and archaeology provides critical insight to the processes by which certain places become sacred and how this is conveyed symbolically. Archaeologists use the term ‘deep time’ to refer to a *longue durée* approach, the extended time scale of archaeological analyses; the term is also employed in a religious context to challenge creationist narratives of Christian history based on biblical time. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, places are not inherently sacred; they are sanctified through formal rites of consecration and spatial rules that set them apart from other locales. The spiritual and physical delineation of sacred space in Christian Europe was usually limited to the curtilage of a church or shrine. This was based on Christian concepts of bounded, consecrated space that developed from the ninth to eleventh centuries CE (Rosenwein 1999). Monastic precincts acquired a kind of immunity which allowed them to have control over their own boundaries as well as regulating access to the sacred; a similar concept of immunity was granted to Buddhist monasteries of the subcontinent from the second or third centuries CE, as a means of constructing sacred space and defining boundaries of jurisdiction (Ray 2014a: xvi). Formal consecration ceremonies conveyed both religious and legal status to Christian churches and objects directly associated with the sacraments. This concern to protect consecrated objects continues today in Catholic Canon Law, ensuring that sacred objects cannot be made over to secular use: chalices are melted down rather than sold; books and vestments are burnt and their ashes buried in consecrated ground (Brooks 2012: 17).

In contrast, Native American and Australian Aboriginal concepts of the sacred encompass the *entirety* of the land, rather than being limited to particular objects, spaces or topographical features (Shackley 2001). ‘Sacred natural sites’ are areas of land or water that hold special spiritual significance to peoples and communities. They are natural features including mountains, forests, rivers, lakes, caves, islands and springs, which may be regarded as inherently sacred, or become sacred through association with religious histories and pilgrimage traditions (Verschuuren et al. 2010: 2). The Aboriginal perspective reminds us that the concept of sacred heritage is culturally specific and may extend beyond the monumental expression of religious sites or cult centres. For example, landscapes associated with *conflict and loss* may also be regarded as sacred heritage, particularly where they represent transformative episodes that shaped a nation’s or a people’s history. European examples include the Scottish battlefields of Bannockburn (1314) and Culloden (1745) (Banks and Pollard 2011), the Battle of Waterloo (Belgium, 1815) and the First World War battlefields of Flanders Fields and the Somme (Picardy), the last of which became strongly linked with Canadian identity (Gough 2007). The conceptual status of a landscape is transformed by the bloodshed and mass sacrifice associated with war, so that battlefields may take on the status of hallowed ground. Sites of so-called dark heritage, such as battlefields, slavery sites and concentration camps, provoke a pilgrimage response, compelling us to visit landscapes where blood was shed and injustice was perpetrated (Biran et al. 2011; Colls 2015). These landscapes of sacrifice represent notions of sacred space that resonate with both secular and religious values, evoking an emotional response that may be regarded as a spiritual experience (Walton 2015: 34).

Many sacred sites fulfil a *memorial* function: there is a close connection between the burial and commemoration of the dead and the definition of sacred space. The presence of the dead attaches a layer of sanctity to a landscape – even contemporary, secular cemeteries take on the status of sacred space, with the disturbance of human remains generally perceived as desecration, regardless of whether the site is consecrated (Kinder 2012: 196). The strength of this association is demonstrated by the fact that cemeteries and funerary monuments may become terrorist targets during religious conflicts; for example, both Islamic and Christian monuments were destroyed during Da’esh’s occupation of northern Iraq (2013–17) (Smith et al. 2016). The use of religious places for burial invests a human, biographical element to sacred space, in which cemeteries and places of worship come to represent the collective symbol for successive generations of a social community (De Dijn 2012: 43). It is significant that places of worship continue to be chosen today as the locale for rites of passage such as weddings and funerals – even among non-believers – and they are selected as the most appropriate venue for memorial services in times of national disaster and collective outpourings of grief (Voyé

2012: 81). The connection of sacred space to human biography is particularly clear in relation to life course rituals and rites of passage, key episodes in establishing memory and personal identity. These examples clarify that sacred sites are not the exclusive preserve of the gods, nor are they strictly perceived as being *other* or separate from everyday life (Shackley 2001; Coomans et al. 2012). Instead, sacred sites represent the coming together of the human and the divine, the tangible and the intangible.

The label of sacred heritage has also been attached to monuments that embody *national memory* and collective identity. In Greece, for example, sites of classical antiquity are referred to as ‘sacred heritage’ in both popular discourse and academic archaeology. Yannis Hamilakis and Eleana Yalouri have argued that classical antiquities represent a kind of secular religion to the Greek nation, noting the strong connections between nationalism and religious institutions (a theme discussed in Chapter 6). Evidence from archaeology and folklore was sought to justify perceived continuities between classical sites and medieval churches of the Greek Orthodox tradition (Hamilakis and Yalouri 1999: 129). The process of constructing or creating a sense of continuity was famously coined ‘the invention of tradition’ by the historian Eric Hobsbawm (Hobsbawm 1983). The wide definition and application of the category ‘sacred heritage’ indicates that cross-cultural, essentialist typologies are not helpful in elucidating the meaning of sacred places. Understandings of sacred heritage are culturally contingent and constantly evolving, drawing on local perceptions of the spiritual *authenticity* of landscapes and material culture.

Authenticity is culturally constructed and has multiple meanings that will be explored in the final chapter. Heritage professionals have traditionally assessed authenticity on the basis of the quality of material evidence according to academic criteria (Emerick 2014). These *materialist* models of authenticity have been challenged by *constructivist* (living heritage) approaches which acknowledge that concepts of authenticity vary in relation to social and cultural contexts (Clark 2010; Jones 2010; Holtorf 2013a). The authenticity of archaeological sites is typically defined by values including ‘real, true, original, innate, reliable and aura’; the elusive quality of aura is that which distinguishes an original from a copy or fake (Myrberg 2004: 153–4). Nanouschka Myrberg Burström suggests that to be valued as authentic, monuments must be presented as ‘frozen in time’, with accretions and complexity pared down to reveal their true core. But the Western concept of authenticity, with its emphasis on originality and pristine preservation, may be inappropriate for application to some religious heritage. Even the principle that sacred heritage should be preserved is culturally relative: the Buddhist emphasis on the idea of *impermanence* implies that decay and renewal is necessary for continuation of life (Karlström 2005). Cornelius Holtorf has drawn attention to the importance of *patina* in perceptions of authenticity – the individual emotional response to

ruins and their perceptible quality of dilapidation, wear and tear. He argues that the ‘age-value’ of a heritage object is more important than its chronological age or the specific nature of its origins (Holtorf 2013a; after Riegl 1982 [1903]).

Religious concepts of authenticity invest the value of *sanctity* in material objects, acquired through formal consecration or transferred through close proximity to saints and deities. Religious understandings of authenticity must be taken into account when dealing with the curation of sacred heritage. For example, when a religious site is deconsecrated, does it retain a sense of ‘residual sanctity’? As religious buildings fall out of use, is it possible to perpetuate their spiritual heritage in processes of adaptive reuse (Coomans 2018)? To what extent should we respect the past uses of religious sites and buildings, long after they have ceased to be used for worship (Bell 2012)? A crucial question is whether the compass of archaeological ethics should extend beyond respect for the remains of the dead (Scarre 2003), to include respect for the *spaces* of past religious practices. These concerns impact on the curation of monuments and material culture that are regarded as holy by contemporary communities. Questions arise particularly around the treatment and status of religious relics: for example, proposals to conserve the Turin Shroud have been resisted because intervention would alter the perceived sacred *aura* of the object (Brooks 2012: 22). For pilgrims of any religion, the authenticity of relics is critical: the medieval church authenticated body parts as relics through a formal ceremony called *inventio* (Geary 1986: 176). Relic collections were curated over many generations and their connection to particular saints was recorded on *authentica*, labels of identification, illustrated by the large collection of medieval relics at Turku Cathedral in Finland (Immonen and Taavitsainen 2014). Unusually, the Turku relics survived the Lutheran Reformation and were rediscovered in 1924. Their authenticity has been tested archaeologically, using AMS radiocarbon dating, DNA and isotopic analysis. Archaeological science has served as proof of historical authenticity for the Turku relics, which were periodically re-wrapped in new textiles and containers, and bundled with other bones. Most of the Turku relics date to the fourteenth century but some were considerably older. Relic collections are sacred ‘assemblages’ that were subject to material processes of repeated ritual curation over centuries.

Heritage approaches based on authenticity have a tendency to divorce monuments from their historical and human context, presenting them as sterile and abandoned, frozen in time (Myrberg 2004). These observations are pertinent to the ruined medieval abbeys of Britain, Scandinavia, the Netherlands and northern Germany, which were dissolved in the Protestant Reformations of the mid-sixteenth century. Monastic heritage sites are often presented as if they were fossilised in the landscape at the point of their dissolution five

centuries ago. In Britain, this approach to monastic ruins developed in the early twentieth century, when concern over the care of ruined abbeys contributed to the impetus for ancient monuments legislation. A distinction emerged between monuments perceived as ‘dead’ versus those which were regarded as ‘living’. While ‘living’ sites could be restored to use, ‘dead’ monuments were ‘frozen’ to serve as documents for public education (Emerick 2014: 42, 53). The preservation ethic of the twentieth century aimed to present the main period of a monument’s use and to strip away extraneous evidence to reveal the monument as a ‘document’ that was believed to ‘speak for itself’ (Emerick 2014: 85). The outcome was the generic presentation of medieval abbeys to illustrate the national story of medieval religion, with local stories and idiosyncrasies erased by conservation interventions. Keith Emerick concludes that the national preservation ethic of ‘dead’ monuments created ruins as the ‘stage set for a consensual, safe, elite and manufactured past which over time became the established (“authorized”) way in which the past was presented, understood and constructed’ (Emerick 2014: 223). In other words, the ‘frozen abbey’ is the ‘Authorized Heritage Discourse’ through which heritage professionals have represented the medieval monastic movement.

Living churches and cathedrals are also framed in terms of authenticity, represented as unproblematic survivals of a living religion. Accretions and complexity of development are masked by restorations that project a false sense of timelessness: such spaces appear to embody seamless *continuity* and the stability of rituals and beliefs (Trigg 2005). These narratives of continuity belie centuries of social and religious change, even violent conflict and ritual discontinuity. For example, during the English Civil War of the mid-seventeenth century, the Anglican Church was suppressed and many cathedrals were sieged and partially destroyed by Parliamentarians (Gilchrist 2005: 229–31). At Winchester Cathedral, the medieval stained glass windows were smashed by Parliamentary troops in 1642, and the shattered fragments were reinstated in a new west window shortly after the Restoration of the English monarchy in 1660 (Figures 1.1 and 1.2). During the French Revolution (1789), religious houses, cathedrals and parish churches were closed in France and



1.1 Winchester Cathedral nave, looking west. Reproduced by kind permission of John Crook



1.2 Winchester Cathedral west window, restored shortly after 1660. Reproduced by kind permission of John Crook

Belgium. From 1794, the new regime tried to impose a civic religion centred on the Cult of Reason, with many churches turned into ‘temples of reason’. Churches were reconsecrated following the Concordate (1801–2) (Coomans 2012: 224). Episodes of conflict and change, such as the English Civil War and the French Revolution, are masked by conservation interventions and heritage narratives that promote the false notion of continuity.

An example that has attracted recent controversy is Córdoba Mezquita-Catedral, a complex sacred monument in Andalusia (Spain) that has become a contested heritage site (Monteiro 2011; Ruggles 2010). This vast edifice is a unique hybrid of Moorish and Christian medieval architecture that draws over 1.5 million visitors each year. The Moorish mosque was built from the late eighth to the late tenth century on the site of a Visigothic cathedral, incorporating hundreds of columns reused from Roman buildings. It was converted to Christian

use in 1236 by the Catholic conqueror Ferdinand III, when it was left largely intact but re-dedicated to the Virgin Mary. In the sixteenth century, a cruciform church was built into the centre of the complex, the iconic Christian symbol implanted in order to colonise Islamic space. This Christian core is enveloped and dwarfed by the Moorish complex, which retains Muslim ritual features such as the mihrab (Figure 1.3). The current display and interpretation of the Mezquita represent its Christian history exclusively, drawing on archaeological evidence for an earlier Christian church on the site. Archaeological authenticity is used to legitimate the cathedral’s continuity of Christian use. The interpretation provides no commentary on religious change, conflict or tolerance, despite the reputation of Islamic Spain as a multi-cultural society (Monteiro 2011: 318). In recent years, tensions have developed when Muslim visitors have attempted to pray, kneeling in front of the mihrab. In 2010, several were arrested and charged with ‘crimes against religious sentiment’. The Catedral has issued statements explaining that a Catholic church must not be used for prayers by other religions (Monteiro 2011: 321).



1.3 Córdoba Mezquita-Catedral (Spain) and its mihrab. Photographs by Toni Castillo Quero and Ruggero Poggianella / Wikipedia / CC BY-SA 2.0 and CC BY-SA 2.0

Conflict over ritual access is a recurring theme at sacred heritage sites, alongside the tendency to present a single narrative of the dominant religion, even where the site is considered sacred to multiple denominations (see Chapter 6). Again, a ‘deep time’ perspective can be useful in elucidating conflicting conceptualisations of sacred space and how these have changed over time. This is particularly pertinent in cases where a sacred site has been appropriated by another religion, such as Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, the



1.4 Southern aerial view of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Photograph by Andrew Shiva / Wikipedia / CC BY-SA 4.0

patriarchal church of Constantinople, built by the Emperor Justinian (532–7 CE). Hagia Sophia was converted into the imperial mosque following the conquest of Istanbul by the Ottomans in 1453. It was turned into a museum in 1935, following the secularisation of Turkey. Despite its status for the past eighty years as a secular monument, Hagia Sophia continues to be venerated as a sacred place by both Muslims and Christians. In recent years, Muslims have staged prayer-protests calling for its return to a mosque and Orthodox Christians have tried to conduct holy services (Avdoulos 2015: 189).

Jerusalem is perhaps the most deeply contested of sacred places: Temple Mount, or Haram ash-Sharif in the Old City of Jerusalem, has long been considered sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims (Grabar and Kedar 2010; Silberman 2001) (Figure 1.4). The extent to which competing religions were allowed access to the site changed over time and there was no consistency of practice within a single religion. The site is regarded as the location of the First Temple, believed to have been constructed by King Solomon 3,000 years ago, and representing Judaism's most holy space. There is archaeological evidence for the Second Temple on the site, which is associated with several episodes in the life of Christ and is therefore an important sacred space for Christians.

A Roman temple was built in the second century CE on the site of the destroyed (Second) Temple. Following the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem in the seventh century CE, it became the site of the al-Aqsa Mosque, the Dome of the Rock and the Dome of the Chain. The site is one of the holiest in Islam, regarded as the location of Muhammad's ascent to heaven. During the Islamic phase, Jews and Christians were allowed access for prayer, in contrast with prohibitions introduced by Christians following the First Crusade in 1099. During the eighty-eight years of Frankish rule, Islamic shrines were Christianised, with the al-Aqsa Mosque transformed into the Temple of Solomon, while a Christian heritage was invented for the Dome of the Rock, which became known as the Lord's Temple (Kedar 2014: 13). These sites were re-dedicated to Islam following Saladin's victory in 1187, but earlier building fabric was reused, including figural sculpture from Christian monuments (Kedar 2014: 16). For one brief decade in its history, a compromise was negotiated that allowed open access to this sacred space for all three religions. Jews and Christians were allowed access to the site from 1229–39, which remained in Muslim control, while the remainder of Jerusalem was under Frankish rule. From the 1240s up to the present day, it has remained a Muslim shrine. While its Christian significance has declined over time, it remains highly venerated by Jews as the site of the destroyed Temple. During the twentieth century its status as a contested site intensified, sometimes erupting in violence, and frequently involving conflicts that implicated archaeology (Silberman 2001; Singh 2016).

SPIRITUAL VALUES: THE 'RE-ENCHANTMENT' OF RELIGIOUS HERITAGE

The failure of the disciplines of archaeology and heritage studies to engage with the sacred may result from perceptions of *value*: what is the value of sacred heritage in an allegedly secular society like Britain? This question was recently put to me very plainly by a trustee of the UK's National Lottery Heritage Fund: 'We live in the most secularised society in the world. What is the rationale for funding a sacred heritage site?' At one level this is clearly true – the majority of people in Britain (53 per cent) state that they have no religious affiliation (British Social Attitudes Survey 2017), but many of these same people actively seek out spiritual experiences (Heelas et al. 2005). There are several issues to unpick here: is there an appetite today for sacred heritage, and if so, by whom, and for what reasons is it valued? What are the different types of value attached to sites and objects of sacred heritage?

Heritage professionals may live in a secular world, but many politicians and intellectuals are concerned about the broader processes of de-secularisation and re-enchancement by religion. Rather than living in a post-modern, secular

world, we may instead be entering a post-secular, religious world (Asad 2003). These concerns arise directly from the increase of Christian fundamentalism in the United States and Islamic extremism in Europe (Fowles 2013: 3). At the same time, there has been a 'spiritual turn' in Western societies, a shift away from organised religion towards an emphasis on the personal experience of spirit, mind and body and their connectedness (Heelas et al. 2005). 'Re-enchantment' is the term used to signal this new openness to areas previously regarded as irrational and non-scientific, such as New Age religion and individual spiritual experience. It counters the view proposed by Max Weber that modernity is characterised by the progressive 'disenchantment of the world' (Landy and Saler 2009). Examples of re-enchantment on the level of individual experience include the rise of 'transcendent tourism' and the resurgence of interest in Christian pilgrimage in Western Europe (Dyas 2004). Cathedrals have experienced a sharp increase in visitors over the past decade, with one quarter of England's population visiting a cathedral each year (Spiritual Capital 2012). Ethnographic study confirms that many of those visiting English cathedrals come to pray, but the majority seek out cathedrals to enjoy art and architecture and to experience an emotional connection with the past. Secular visitors to cathedrals engage in spiritual practices, such as lighting candles in thanks or memory of loved ones, and appreciating choral evensong in an inspirational space. The boundary between secular tourism and religious pilgrimage is fluid – cathedrals are places for personal, spiritual reflection that is not necessarily linked to institutional religion (Bowman and Coleman 2017).

What accounts for the contemporary appeal and significance of the religious past? Neil MacGregor argues that it defines who we are now, regardless of whether we align personally with institutional religion, and that it occupies the political centre stage as the focus of identity and global conflicts (MacGregor 2018). Spirituality is literally the new 'spirit of the age' (*zeitgeist*), at least among the prosperous sectors of the population that engage in cultural tourism. This is demonstrated by the marked increase in visits to religious buildings, the frequency in staging of temporary exhibitions focusing on the sacred, and even the foundation of new museums entirely dedicated to religious life in the past (Badone 2015; Brooks 2012, Buggeln 2012; Shackley 2002). At the time of writing, the British Museum in London and the Ashmolean in Oxford recently staged exhibitions on world religions and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York hosted an exhibition exploring the links between Catholic material culture and couture design. A new Museum of the Bible opened in Washington, DC in late 2017 and an outpost for this museum is in the planning at the redundant parish church of St Mary Le Strand in Westminster, London. An ambitious new project is also in development at Auckland Castle (Northumberland): the Faith Museum will be a permanent gallery dedicated to exploring the impact that faith of all denominations has had on the history and lives of

people in the British Isles from prehistory to the present day. The project has received £10 million funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and additional funds from private individuals and charitable trusts. In Toronto, the inspirational Aga Khan Museum opened in 2014, combining a new Ismaili religious centre with a museum dedicated to the art of Islam. The aim is to achieve better understanding of Islamic history and culture and to promote research, artistic performance and discussion around diversity (Aga Khan Museum Guide 2014: 7).

The Aga Khan Museum is unusual in its integral physical connection with a living faith centre. Museums typically present religious artefacts removed from their social and spatial context of worship. Curators are careful to avoid presenting objects in a way that might encourage ritual behaviour in museum spaces (Buggeln 2012); for example, curators at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London were wary about setting up an altar space in the Medieval and Renaissance Galleries that opened in 2009 (Brooks 2012: 19). An exhibition that attracted a great deal of religious attention was itself subject to ethnographic study – the British Museum's 'Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics and Devotion in Medieval Europe', 2011 (Bagnoli et al. 2011). The Treasures exhibition was the UK's largest display of relics since the Reformation and it attracted high numbers of Catholic and Eastern Orthodox visitors. Some came specifically for the religious experience of venerating the relics, because they could get closer to the objects in the museum setting than in the concealed spaces that they usually occupy in churches (Berns 2016). Many kissed the glass cases or created contact-relics to take away, by pressing objects against the glass cases that contained the relics, a practice also seen at the Martyr's Museum in Tehran (Gruber 2012). Such intensity of public religiosity is rare in Britain and prompted extensive media comment (Brooks 2012: 19).

Why do people visit sacred heritage sites and how do they experience them? Some of the most popular tourist attractions in Europe are sites of medieval Christianity, such as the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, which attracts nearly 14 million visitors per year, in comparison with 10 million visitors to Disneyland Paris (Stausberg 2011). Many visitors to sacred heritage sites seek a sense of the numinous or an appreciation of the 'spirit of place'; they quest for spiritual or imagined landscapes (Dallen and Olsen 2006). Recent reinterpretations of monastic heritage sites have begun to respond to this spiritual current: for example, English Heritage now presents Rievaulx Abbey (North Yorkshire) (Figure 1.5) as a place of spiritual nourishment and sanctity (Fergusson et al. 2016), while previously it was projected principally in terms of the economic success of the Cistercian order as sheep-farmers. Battle Abbey (Sussex) is represented as a monastery founded by William the Conqueror as an act of spiritual atonement following the Battle of Hastings in 1066 (Coad et al. 2017), and it has become a place of living commemoration for those lost



1.5 Aerial view of Rievaulx Abbey (North Yorkshire). Photograph by the author

in recent military conflicts (Michael Carter, pers. comm.). Public responses to Rievaulx Abbey comment on the value of medieval monastic sites as places for personal reflection: words such as ‘evocative, serene, peaceful, magical, atmospheric, tranquil, awesome, mystical, breath-taking, solace, contemplation’ stand out in Rievaulx’s TripAdvisor reviews.

For many visitors to sacred heritage sites, personal experience is detached from any motive of denominational religion. People seek out holy places in their search for meaning and spiritual encounter, to give thanks and to remember loved ones, and to experience a sense of awe that takes them beyond their daily lives (Dyas 2017). For the secular-minded, the value of these sites may lie in the sense of *timelessness* and immortality that they convey: religious sites are ‘anchors of collective memory’ and a means for the non-religious to reconnect with the spiritual domain (Badone 2015; Voyé 2012). Visitors to living cathedrals, churches and monasteries experience a distinctive aesthetic of space; their access is controlled and they are asked to moderate behaviour and dress. Christian space is hierarchically ordered from east to west, with the most sacred (eastern) space of the high altar inaccessible to visitors. The scale and acoustics of cathedrals prompt a sense of awe, reverence and reflection. A sojourn in sacred space provides a reprieve from the chaos of the real world – this experience has been likened to Foucault’s concept of ‘heterotopia’, a ritual space of ‘otherness’ that exists out of time (Foucault 1986; Shackley 2002).

This sense of 'timelessness' is palpable in Catholic and Orthodox monasteries that are still in use by contemporary monastic communities and open to visitors as heritage sites. Here, direct continuity can be observed in material spaces, artefacts, rituals and techniques of the body, such as monastic dress, fasting, celibacy and sexual segregation. This is exemplified by Mount Athos in Greece, a Byzantine monastery founded in 972 CE and thriving today as a theocratic monastic state of twenty Orthodox monasteries located on a peninsula 56 km (35 miles) long (Andriotis 2011). Strictly controlled access is permitted to male pilgrims and a small number of male visitors; in a true mark of monastic authenticity, all women (and female domestic animals) are excluded from the monastic peninsula. Konstantinos Andriotis argues that visitors to sacred heritage sites seek a specific type of authenticity: 'realness' at Mount Athos is confirmed by seeing living monks, observing their daily life, religious rituals and material spaces. Like other commentators on sacred heritage, he emphasises the importance of timelessness: 'visitors have a chance to step back in time and enter into an existential experience of unmeasured and uncontrolled time' (Andriotis 2011: 1622).

What is the value of sacred heritage to contemporary nations and communities? When the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris was ravaged by fire in April 2019, the value of financial pledges to rebuild was unprecedented, far exceeding donations to humanitarian crises. The speed and scale of the response reflects the cathedral's status as a national symbol, one which encapsulates national pride and identity, but also offers potential brand association to business donors. The 'value' of heritage is usually measured in terms of social, economic and political value, for example heritage may contribute to social and physical well-being, economic regeneration and conflict resolution (Holtorf 2013b: 17). Pilgrimage sites provide an instructive example: the revival of pilgrimage contributes to well-being, with contemporary pilgrims motivated by the physical challenge of the journey, therapeutic contact with nature and the promise of encountering the 'authentic past'. The physical experience of the pilgrimage journey is a significant part of the heritage value, exemplified by the arduous Camino to Santiago de Compostela (Spain), undertaken by 175,000 pilgrims each year. Local residents have benefited economically from the revival of pilgrimage and the Camino landscape has been restored and themed to complement the medieval pilgrimage narrative (Frey 1998; Maddrell et al. 2015: 10).

Sacred heritage is frequently invoked in nationalist narratives to contribute political value (see Chapter 6). For example, archaeological investigations of Buddhist sites in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by colonial archaeologists provided powerful imagery for the independent state of India from 1947, such as the iconic Sarnath lion capital of Ashoka, adopted as a government insignia on stationery, passports and currency (Ray 2014b). Sacred

heritage carries symbolic capital that can be put to good or ill effect; a negative consequence is the targeting of religious heritage in times of war or ideological conflict, for example the destruction by the Taliban in 2001 of the Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan (dated to the late sixth century CE). There is a long tradition of targeting iconic sacred architecture as a strategy of war: for instance, both Islamic mosques and Catholic churches were destroyed systematically during the conflict in former Yugoslavia (1991–2001). Robert Bevan argues that the destruction of sacred heritage deliberately targets a nation's culture, together with its collective memory and identity, and that such acts should be viewed as being intrinsically linked to genocide (Bevan 2016). Sacred heritage is increasingly vulnerable to acts of terrorism which seek global impact by using social media to disseminate the destruction of cultural heritage that carries visual and symbolic capital (Smith et al. 2016).

However, sacred heritage can also contribute positive political value in post-conflict reparation and reconciliation, for example in Northern Ireland (Horning et al. 2015). Medieval Jewish heritage has served this purpose in Austria, a nation which has struggled to come to terms with its role in the Holocaust (Gruber 2002: 293–6). In 1995, the decision was taken to commission Austria's first Holocaust memorial, designed by the British sculptor Rachel Whiteread. The site chosen was the location of the medieval synagogue on Judenplatz, destroyed after a pogrom in 1420, when the Jews of Vienna were murdered, expelled or forcibly baptised. Research excavations revealed three phases of the synagogue as well as new information on standards of living in Vienna's Jewish ghetto. The archaeological evidence served as material witness for the earliest violent persecution of the Jewish community and provided a platform for Austrian reparation. The controversial monument was unveiled in 2000, a stark representation of lost lives as a library of sealed books in a 'nameless library'. More broadly, development of the archaeological study of medieval Judaism since the Second World War has contributed to a sense of identity and pride in the past for European Jews (Gruber 2002).

Despite the broad range of roles for sacred heritage discussed above, religious or spiritual value is rarely given explicit consideration in archaeological definitions of heritage value. However, it is central to the definition outlined by Siân Jones of the social value of heritage: 'including people's sense of identity, belonging and place, as well as forms of memory and *spiritual association*' (Jones 2017: 21; my italics). In evaluating the social value of heritage, Jones notes the importance of intangible heritage including spiritual associations, folklore, myth and family history in shaping how communities relate to specific places (Jones 2017; Jones and Leech 2015). The question of spiritual value has been addressed more explicitly in relation to built/architectural heritage, in response to the increasing number of places of worship that are falling out of religious use (e.g. the 1,600 Anglican churches in England that

have been declared redundant). Thomas Coomans highlights the profound crisis facing contemporary Western monasticism as dozens of monasteries and convents close each year. He argues that intangible heritage adds heritage value and that the 'spirit of place' should be respected and protected in the adaptive reuse of former monastic architecture (Coomans 2018: 127, 154).

Lilian Voyé has considered the multiple values attached to religious buildings beyond their spiritual value to faith communities, noting a strong impetus to preserve religious heritage, even amongst non-believers. She explores the non-religious value of places of worship in terms of: aesthetic/artistic value; historical identity; collective memory; community identity; landmarks; and economic resources (Voyé 2012). Collective memory may focus on elements other than religion: for example, a study of the value of the Wearmouth and Jarrow monastic landscapes concluded that Bede's monastery was less significant to local identity than the nineteenth-century industrial heritage. Local memory and sense of place were more keenly attached to industrial landscapes that previously brought economic prosperity to the northeast region of England (Turner et al. 2013: 186).

Former Christian places of worship are being adapted for use by other faiths, such as a former Catholic church in Amsterdam, transformed into the Fatih Mosque (Beekers and Arab 2016). The changing landscape of urban religion offers an entry point to engage with contemporary social diversity through religious heritage – 'the tangible presence of religion and the co-existence of new and longstanding religious buildings, sites and artifacts in urban spaces' (Knott et al. 2016: 123). Historical perspectives take on increasing importance as contemporary religious spaces change use, responding to the current needs of migrant communities or networks of spiritual seekers. Rather than focus on the history of a particular site, new approaches to 'iconic religion' advocate study of the interactive nature of religious architecture and local communities – 'the ways in which places of worship are often interwoven with other religious and non-religious sites within a particular geographical space, both in the past and the present' (Beekers and Arab 2016: 141).

The resurgence of interest in pilgrimage amongst faith groups is clear evidence of the contemporary value of sacred heritage. There are strong traditions of pilgrimage at prominent sacred sites in Britain such as Lindisfarne (Northumberland), Iona (Scottish Inner Hebrides), Wearmouth and Jarrow (Tyne and Wear) and Glastonbury (Somerset), as part of a wider European movement of pilgrimage revival. New pilgrimage traditions are also actively being developed by faith communities as a means of revitalising local religion: for example on the Cowal peninsula in southern Argyll, a project focusing on 'faith tourism' incorporates medieval churches and carved stones (Márkus 2016). How do these local communities value and experience medieval sacred heritage? These questions have been addressed in Avril Maddrell's study of

emerging pilgrimage practices on the Isle of Man (Maddrell 2015). She considers the annual pilgrimage which centres on the island's medieval keeills, tiny chapels that may have originated as proprietary (private) churches associated with each *treen* (land associated with a family group of small community). There are thirty-five keeills on Man and sixteen parish churches, many of which have place name elements connected with Celtic saints. However, they have little historical documentation to confirm their date or circumstances of foundation (Maddrell 2015: 137). 'Praying the Keeills' began in 2006 as an ecumenical movement, a means for individuals and communities of worship to connect through prayer walks focusing on medieval religious sites in the landscape. The participants are largely local, and while many are motivated by faith, others attend for the sense of fellowship, the physical experience of walking and interest in the island's heritage.

Maddrell concludes that the heritage of the keeills is treated as a 'spiritual resource' by the islanders. Heritage is central to the pilgrimage endeavour: local historians and Manx National Heritage curators provide public lectures to complement the prayer walks. Worship, walking and talking have 'reanimated' the keeills as sacred spaces and contributed to Manx national identity (Maddrell 2015: 135, 140). Archaeological authenticity is regarded as important because there is interest in the continuity of the keeills with earlier ritual practices (Maddrell 2015: 144). There is also a projection of the contemporary values of Celtic spirituality onto the past – the belief that the early Celtic church was closer to nature and less hierarchical and patriarchal than other church traditions (Maddrell 2015: 133; Power 2006). On the Isle of Man, local people have actively created a new purpose for medieval religious heritage that contributes spiritual value alongside well-being and cultural and economic value. Maddrell suggests that this kind of faith heritage is a good example of what has been termed 'heritage from below' (Robertson 2012), a local, grassroots movement which mobilises people and contributes to both the construction of identity and place-making.

PARTICIPATION AND PRACTICE: RE-ENGAGING MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY WITH THE SACRED

This chapter began by examining how the discipline of archaeology projects a secular framework of interpretation onto the archaeology of religion. I have reviewed cultural definitions of sacred heritage and the importance of the concepts of *authenticity*, *continuity* and *timelessness* in heritage narratives and visitor experience at medieval sacred sites. The value of sacred heritage in a secular society is often questioned, but there is ample evidence of increasing engagement with the spiritual through heritage, including growth in visitor numbers to religious sites and buildings, and increased participation in

pilgrimage. The appetite for sacred heritage among cultural tourists is reflected in the growing number of exhibitions on aspects of religious life and in the founding of new museums dedicated to sacred heritage. Previous archaeological discussions of heritage value have tended to omit religious or spiritual value; however, this dimension is now gaining attention in definitions of value that place greater emphasis on intangible heritage. At the same time, we must acknowledge that there is no single perspective on spiritual heritage; the concepts of multi-vocality and contested heritage are crucial in evaluating spiritual values in relation to heritage. In concluding, I want to consider how we can apply the lessons of recent research in order to *re-engage* the practice of medieval archaeology with the sacred. There are two separate strands on which to reflect – how we engage more *actively* with living communities in adding value to sacred heritage; and how we engage more *meaningfully* with religious beliefs in our interpretations of medieval archaeology.

Classic definitions of sacred heritage emphasise the *otherness* of sacred sites: they are places associated with the gods and separate from everyday life (Shackley 2001). However, recent research on the *local value* of heritage demonstrates that religious sites and objects are fully integrated in contemporary life. Jones argues that the spiritual associations attached to a sense of place inform a community's collective identity and memory (Jones 2017). Maddrell's study of pilgrimage practice on the Isle of Man is a superb example of this process: the community has reanimated the heritage of the keeills to grow ecumenicalism, and at the same time, they have strengthened local and national identity in connection with medieval archaeology (Maddrell 2015). The Manx example helps us to tease out the values of sacred heritage: many people are drawn to the annual pilgrimage through a desire to share their faith, but secular participants seek companionship, local heritage and the sensory experience of walking the landscape. The 'spiritual' value of heritage is part of a more *holistic* experience and perception of religious sites and landscapes – one that is not exclusive to faith communities.

Religious heritage can evoke a 'spiritual' experience in secular individuals by prompting reflection on the numinous or on mortality and loss – for example, in the context of battlefields (discussed above). Another powerful example is the Lithuanian celebration of All Souls' Day (2 November): *Vėlinių Diena*, the season of spirit, is an annual pilgrimage to Lithuania's cemeteries to place flowers and light candles at the graves of the dead. Both secular and religious participants make the pilgrimage to remember loved ones, including Catholics, Orthodox and Protestant Christians, Jews, Muslims, followers of Baltic nature religions and Soviet-style atheists (Thorpe 2017). Secular engagement with sacred heritage may also bring a connection with nature, an appreciation of social memory, and the sense of well-being that comes from the 'timelessness' and 'stillness' that characterise medieval religious spaces. 'Spiritual' value is not

incompatible with secular society or humanist values; it is closely bound up with *well-being and aesthetic value*, the sensory and visual qualities of heritage that are experienced on an individual basis.

Jones argues that the social value of heritage should be regarded as dynamic, a process of *valuing* heritage places rather than a fixed value category that can be defined and measured (Jones 2017; Jones and Leech 2015). Social value becomes an index of how local people engage with heritage, rather than the historical or material significance of a site or monument. Places of relatively minor historical value may accrue high social value; for example, when the tangible heritage of medieval carved stones and churches are animated in ecumenical pilgrimage practices (e.g. Maddrell 2015; Márkus 2016). To ascertain this value requires archaeologists to engage in participatory research, through ethnographic fieldwork, participant observation, focus groups, and drawing on oral history, historical and photographic archives (Jones 2017). Debates about authority and multi-vocality in geography, anthropology and archaeology are prompting a paradigm shift towards participatory methods that emphasise co-creation of knowledge and community engagement, as well as prioritising the ethical responsibilities of working with living communities (Meskell 2009). Participatory action research methodologies recognise that marginalised groups play an active role in the construction of identity and place (Kinson et al. 2007). These approaches resonate with the notion of ‘heritage from below’ – the use of heritage to mobilise and empower diverse groups that identify along axes of age, class, gender, ethnicity or faith (Robertson 2012).

Our interrogation of sacred heritage should also give critical consideration to its *political* use – to conflict and contestation. As Lynn Meskell reminds us, ‘all heritage work essentially starts from the premise that the past is contested, conflictual and multiply constituted’ (Meskell 2012: 1). A key characteristic of sacred places is that they are spaces of contestation, where legitimate ownership of sacred symbols is continually negotiated (Chidester and Linenthal 1995: 9–16). The archaeology of medieval churches and monasteries can appear deceptively *neutral, a-political* and *a-theoretical*. When archaeology is projected as heritage, however, it is never neutral, particularly where the subject matter is explicitly ideological. We recognise that prehistoric ritual sites like Stonehenge and Çatalhöyük are regarded as sacred sites by contemporary pagan and New Age communities, resulting in potential conflict with archaeologists and heritage managers (Bender 1998; Hodder 1998; Wallis and Blain 2003; White 2016).

Examples such as Córdoba’s Mezquita and Istanbul’s Hagia Sophia demonstrate that medieval sacred heritage can also be highly contested, revealing tensions and confrontations *between faiths* in the past and the present. These sites help us to better understand the deep histories of social diversity, to grasp ‘that

complex, messy cultural interactions are not new but have deep roots in European history' (Malik 2015). Sacred heritage is also used to legitimate contemporary authority *within faiths*, for instance along axes of gender. At the Greek Orthodox shrine of Tinos, church authorities cited historical precedents in their efforts to constrain female pilgrimage and to erase women's 'heightened emotionalism' from ritual spaces that they regard as public and male (Dubisch 1995: 219–23). Conflicts also arise *between dominant and alternative faiths*, as evidenced at Gamla Uppsala in Sweden, a site of national importance as the prime cult centre for both Old Norse religion and medieval Christianity. During the twentieth century, a grove of aspen trees became established near the medieval cathedral; in 2015, the Church of Sweden cut down the grove and destroyed the stumps, an act which was interpreted by some neo-pagans as an attempt to discourage their activities (John Ljungkvist, pers. comm.). Disagreements on strategies for heritage interpretation or conservation may result in conflicts *between heritage professionals and faith communities* (Jones 2010). For example, the reinstatement of the high altar at the ruined Cistercian abbey of Rievaulx took place in 2015, after a long campaign by senior Anglican leaders was successful in overcoming reservations held by English Heritage, the site's custodian.

My second question is how can we engage more meaningfully with the sacred in our interpretations of medieval archaeology? The connection is in the reflexive relationship between *archaeological knowledge and values* – how what we value informs what we seek to understand. I have argued that medieval archaeology follows the Western intellectual tradition in projecting a secular framework of values onto the study of religion (Fowles 2013), resulting in the prioritisation of 'rational' categories such as economy and technology over 'irrational' categories such as magic and folk belief. We have also seen that archaeological evidence is frequently used to underpin narratives of continuity and timelessness in relation to sacred space, with inadequate consideration given to *change, conflict and human agency* in shaping religious beliefs and practice. Some archaeologists have advocated an approach to the study of religion based on practice theory in order to emphasise agency and embodiment (e.g. Fogelin 2007; Petts 2011; Swenson 2015; Thomas et al. 2017). These approaches examine ritual as a *material process* and give priority to the active role of people in using sacred space and material culture, in contrast with secularist approaches that see religious participants as passive and controlled by elites.

The study of medieval pilgrimage is a pertinent example. Archaeological approaches have emphasised the economic dimensions of medieval pilgrimage, ranging from the production and sale of pilgrim souvenirs to the commercial and physical infrastructure developed at urban and rural shrines (e.g. Pestell 2005; Stopford 1994). In contrast, anthropological, historical and geographical perspectives on medieval pilgrimage emphasise embodiment and gendered

experience (e.g. Bailey 2013; Bugslag 2016; Coleman and Eade 2004; Foley 2011). The historian James Bugslag has highlighted the intimate nature of the physical engagement between the medieval pilgrim and the shrine, which might involve kissing the tomb or relics; pilgrims thrusting their hands into foramina shrines to recover dust; ingesting blood, dust or water that was believed to have come into contact with the saint; bathing in water associated with the shrine; and sleeping at the saint's tomb in the hope of receiving religious visions. At Chartres, for example, pilgrims kept vigils in the cathedral, which was designed with a sloping floor and water system to sluice out the church each morning. Infirm pilgrims seeking a cure slept for nine nights in the cathedral crypt, which was staffed by female nurses in the fifteenth century (Bugslag 2016: 230, 233). Miracle stories at English shrines record men, women and children keeping nocturnal vigils in the churches at Reading Abbey and Beverley Minster, with women staying eight or nine nights at the shrines of Gilbert of Sempringham and St Frideswide of Oxford (Bailey 2013: 503). Pilgrims made offerings of candles and placed votives, often models of the afflicted body part for which they sought a cure. They also purchased cheap souvenirs or 'signs', which served as contact-relics to protect them on the homeward journey (see Chapter 4). Archaeologists have focused on these pilgrim signs as the most direct material evidence for medieval pilgrimage, recently extending this study to include practices of ritual deposition of pilgrimage souvenirs in the landscape (Anderson 2010; Spencer 1998). However, they have seldom considered the *embodied* experience of the pilgrimage journey or the ritual experience at the shrine (see Lash 2018 for an embodied perspective on early medieval Irish pilgrimage).

This is where archaeology might engage fruitfully with folklore, particularly in considering the rich evidence of folk belief in Scotland. Both archaeology and folklore reveal evidence for the persistence of material practices and embodied rites associated with pilgrimage, such as the construction of cairns and the placing of white pebbles. Cairns of pebbles on the beach at Columba's Bay on Iona were likely created by medieval pilgrims, a tradition that continues today; for example at Colmcille's Well, one of the three stations on the Glencolmcille pilgrimage, each pilgrim carries up three stones while saying prescribed prayers (Yeoman 1999: 77–9). Folklore sources suggest that these traditions continued into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as healing rituals associated with holy wells, where pilgrims gathered stones and placed them on cairns as part of the healing rite. These embodied practices appear to represent long-term continuities but they took on new meanings in a post-medieval context. Healing wells and pools, such as St Fillan's Well in the southeast Highlands (see Figure 5.3) and Loch Maree in the northwest, became associated with folk cures for insanity (Donoho 2014). At St Fillan's Well, the ritual involved circling the cairn three times and then placing an offering on

the cairn, either a stone or a rag. The unfortunate sufferer was then bound and left overnight in the ruins of the chapel, with St Fillan's Bell placed on their head (Donoho 2014: 31). Emily Donoho argues that the religious aspect of the rite was lost as it became more medicalised in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, connected with the growing interest in cures for insanity that included cold water bathing and walking (Donoho 2014: 36).

On the Isle of Maree, pilgrims drank from the well and made offerings to an adjacent oak tree, or placed votives in chinks in the rock, such as coins, pins and buttons (Houlbrook 2015: 129). Rags and ribbons were tied to the tree in the eighteenth century, in the tradition of a cloutie tree; in the nineteenth century it became more common to nail metal objects into the tree on Maree, including coins, buckles and nails (Figures 1.6 and 1.7). Ceri Houlbrook argues that this was part of a protective ritual, drawing on the Highland belief that metal repelled malevolent supernatural creatures such as fairies. The practice persists into the present day; however, the meaning of the ritual had changed by the late nineteenth century. The tree was originally central to healing rites involving the well and gradually became a wishing tree, a more secular ritual, but one still involving embodied practices of pilgrimage. In both these examples, folklore sources are used critically to assess the evolving meanings of rituals that appear superficially to represent long-term continuity, but in practice embody changing beliefs (Donoho 2014; Houlbrook 2015).



1.6 Coin tree on Isle Maree, Wester Ross (Northwest Highlands) in 2016 © Mick Sharp



1.7 Isle Maree, Wester Ross (Northwest Highlands) © Mick Sharp



1.8 The Witness Cairn at the Isle of Whithorn (Dumfries and Galloway) in 2007.

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Contemporary pilgrims are drawn to the idea of *ritual continuity* at sites of medieval sacred heritage such as St Fillan's Well and Loch Maree. At the Isle of Whithorn, a new cairn was begun in 1997 as an ecumenical act to mark 1,600 years since St Ninian established the church in Scotland (Maddrell 2009). The cairn began as a local act of celebration, with school children placing stones that bore their names, later followed by pilgrims placing stones. It eventually grew to a substantial mound, with pilgrims of any faith – or no faith – placing a symbolic stone as an act of witness. Cairns are regarded by local people as an ancient communal rite, a means of marking a burial or a route through the landscape. Many of the stones placed at Whithorn's Witness Cairn are placed in memory of the recent dead, both human and animal companions (Figure 1.8). Placing a stone represents a personal, spir-

itual act, one that engages with the material practices and locales of medieval sacred heritage. Contemporary communities create their own value around medieval sacred heritage, which often involves 'the invention of tradition' (Hobsbawm 1983), and which engages both faith communities and secular pilgrims in creating a religious imaginary.

The themes introduced here are developed in the following chapters through more specific attention to medieval monastic archaeology and heritage. The geographical focus is British, drawing on comparative material from other regions of Europe. I have given particular priority to the archaeology of medieval Scotland, providing a case study through which to explore the regional character of monasticism (Chapters 2 and 4). Monasticism was a pan-European social movement driven to a large extent by powerful rulers and monastic orders. How did later medieval monasticism respond to *local* variations in belief, and to what extent did earlier, *indigenous* practices influence the local interpretation of monasticism? Chapter 2 begins by reflecting on the relationship between archaeological knowledge and values, particularly the role of Scottish national identity in shaping approaches to the study of medieval monasticism. The research agenda for monastic archaeology in Britain has given little consideration either to the Scottish experience of later medieval monasticism or to its distinctive material expression.

Chapters 3 and 4 pursue a ‘practice-based’ approach to monastic archaeology that emphasises agency and the active role of space, material culture and the body in medieval religious practice. Inspiration is taken from the emerging field of the material study of religion, which interrogates how bodies and things engage to construct the sensory experience of religion (Meyer et al. 2010; Morgan 2010). Archaeology provides insight to medieval religion as ‘embodied, procedural knowledge embedded in the material world’ (Mohan and Warnier 2017: 372), explored here through technologies that are characteristic of the monastic lifestyle. Geoff Egan compared the excavated assemblages of sixteen monastic sites in Britain and identified twenty-one categories of object that commonly occur (Egan 1997; Thomas et al. 1997: 107–11). The objects can be categorised in terms of *liturgical practice* (ornate metalwork), *personal devotion* (paternosters, papal bullae, burial goods, scourge), *music* (tuning pegs), *literacy* (styli, pencils, writing tablets, book mounts, parchment holders, spectacles, seal matrices), *hygiene* (taps and pipes), *privacy* (curtained beds evidenced by curtain rings), *textile-working* (spindle whorls, thimbles) and *trade* (jettons, weights, balances). None of these objects or technologies are exclusive to monastic sites; together, however, they represent a distinctive materiality of later medieval monasticism.

Monastic materiality is considered here in relation to ritual technologies of medieval medicine (Chapter 3), magic (Chapter 4) and memory (Chapter 5). While magic and medicine may appear to represent contradictory doctrines, both involved practices that aimed to protect, heal and transform the Christian body. The significance of magic and medicine to medieval monasteries is seldom explored in heritage interpretations of monastic sites, while academic approaches tend to study monasteries in isolation from hospitals and parish communities. These chapters challenge the traditional dichotomies of secular/religious and heterodox/orthodox, demonstrating the value of more holistic approaches to archaeological interpretations of medieval beliefs. They also detect regional differences in technologies of medicine and magic, reflecting local variations in monastic practice that may connect to earlier, indigenous beliefs. The incorporation and reworking of earlier indigenous beliefs is a theme that recurs throughout this book, revealing that later medieval monasteries drew actively upon their own concepts of sacred heritage.

Chapter 5 focuses on the monastic ‘sense of place’, how religious practices connected the body with material culture to create the sensory and emotional experience of sacred landscapes. A deep time perspective is taken to consider the monastic biography of place, evaluating the changing meanings of medieval sacred landscapes after the Reformation, and refuting the perception that medieval monasteries were ‘frozen in time’ (a theme discussed above). Particular attention is given to Glastonbury Abbey, an iconic monastic site that holds a unique place in English cultural identity. Glastonbury provides

rich insights to the themes of place and memory and how sacred landscapes were actively *reimagined* by successive generations. Chapter 6 returns to the theme of sacred heritage, examining political and spiritual discourses and the role of archaeology in authenticating or challenging myths and narratives connected with medieval sacred sites. It draws together perspectives from heritage studies and medieval archaeology, to reflect on the changing meanings of authenticity and the value of archaeology in interpreting sacred heritage.